

Can social media lead to eating disorders?

May 7 2019, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Traditional media, including TV and magazine ads, tend to portray ideals of physical perfection that can fuel worries about body image and eating disorders. A study from the University of Pittsburgh

School of Medicine found that spending hours on social media is linked to these issues, too.

In particular, people in the top 25% of high-volume social media users were more than twice as likely to have an [eating disorder](#). Among the [social media sites](#) included in the study were Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, as well as Pinterest, Snapchat and LinkedIn.

What the researchers still don't know is which comes first—whether social media creates an environment that can lead to [body image](#) concerns and eating disorders, or whether people with these issues connect with others like them through social media and, in turn, find support to continue their unhealthy eating.

These are the most common types of eating disorders:

- **Anorexia**—eating so little you're at a dangerously low weight, which can lead to cardiac arrest and potentially fatal electrolyte imbalances.
- **Bulimia**—eating huge amounts of food and then intentionally vomiting to prevent what you've eaten from being digested, or misusing laxatives.
- **Binge-eating**—consuming large quantities of food.

It's important to recognize signs of an eating disorder in yourself or a loved one and get help before it affects quality of life or becomes life-threatening. Even occasional disordered eating is cause for concern—it doesn't need to be a daily pattern to require medical care.

Other studies have found that [social media](#) use can also lead to social isolation and depression, so keep track of how many hours a day you spend on various platforms and watch for signs of any of these negative consequences.

More information: NEDA, the National Eating Disorders Association, has more on [the signs and symptoms](#) of the many types of eating disorders.

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